

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7144

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

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PASS AGRICULTURE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, IN

SUBJ: FOOD SITUATION IN NORTH AND NORTHEASTERN INDIA

BEGIN SUMMARY - ASSISTANT AGRICULTURAL ATTACHE AND NEW DELHI REPRESENTATIVE OF U.S. WESTERN WHEAT ASSOCIATES VISITED LAST WEEK STATE CAPITAL OF UTTAR PRADESH, BIHAR, WEST BENGAL, AND ORISSA TO OBSERVE CROP PROSPECTS AND CURRENT FOOD SITUATION. OUTLOOK FOR KHARIF CROP (FALL AND WINTER HARVESTED) GENERALLY GOOD TO VERY GOOD. CURRENT FOOD SITUATION VERY TIGHT IN ALL FOUR STATES, ALTHOUGH SOME EASEMENT EXPECTED WITH UPCOMING KHARIF CROP. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY OFFICER AND U.S. WHEAT REPRESENTATIVE MADE TRIP DURING SEP 24-29 TO NORTH AND NORTHEASTERN STATES OF UTTAR PRADESH, BIHAR, WEST BENGAL, AND ORISSA TO DISCUSS WITH APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS CURRENT FOOD SITUATION AND OUTLOOK. STATES VISITED HAVE POPULATION OF APPROXIMATELY 225 MILLION AND NORMALLY ACCOUNT FOR APPROXIMATELY 44 PERCENT OF INDIA'S TOTAL RICE AND PULSE PRODUCTION, 34 PERCENT OF ITS CORN

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PRODUCTION, AS WELL AS SUBSTANTIAL QUANTITIES OF WHEAT AND

BARLEY HARVESTED IN THE SPRING.

2. CURRENT OUTLOOK FOR KHARIF CROPS GENERALLY GOOD TO VERY GOOD. OFFICIALS INDICATED THAT HARMFUL EFFECT ON RICE OF STOPPAGE OF MONSOON RAINS FROM LATE JUNE TO LATE JULY IN UTTAR PRADESH AND BIHAR LARGELY OVERCOME, ALTHOUGH SOME DAMAGE TO CORN AND OTHER COARSE GRAIN CROPS EXPECTED. REPORTED FLOODS IN AREA NOT EXPECTED TO HAVE SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON TOTAL PRODUCTION. WEST BENGAL, ORISSA, AND TO A LESSER DEGREE, BIHAR, EXPECTING VERY GOOD RICE CROPS. THIS EXPECTED TO HELP RAISE INDIA'S TOTAL RICE PRODUCTION SIGNIFICANTLY ABOVE 1972-73. ANY DECREASE IN COARSE GRAIN PRODUCTION EXPECTED TO BE MORE THAN MADE UP BY INCREASED PRODUCTION IN OTHER AREAS OF INDIA.

3. FOOD SITUATION IN AREA HAS BECOME PROGRESSIVELY TIGHTER SINCE EARLY SUMMER. ALL STATES HAVE BEEN EXPERIENCING A DECREASE IN THE CENTERS MONTHLY ALLOTMENT OF FOODGRAINS FROM DISTRIBUTION THROUGH FAIR PRICE SHOPS. MARKET PRICES HAVE GENERALLY RISEN SUBSTANTIALLY SINCE JUNE AND CURRENTLY IN MOST AREAS ARE ABOUT TWO TO THREE TIMES GREATER THAN THE SELLING PRICES OF THE FAIR PRICE SHOPS. THE PRICE SITUATION IS EXPECTED TO EASE SOMEWHAT WITH UPCOMING KHARIF CROP. HOWEVER, AS LONG AS OPEN MARKET PRICES REMAIN SUBSTANTIALLY ABOVE THE ISSUE PRICES OF THE FAIR PRICE SHOPS, DEMAND AGAINST THE PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM IS EXPECTED TO REMAIN STRONG. GENERAL FEELING IS THAT THE CENTER WILL NOT BE ABLE TO SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASE MONTHLY ALLOCATIONS OF FOODGRAINS TO THE STATES UNTIL THE RABI CROP, IF THEN. RECENTLY ARRANGED FOODGRAIN IMPORTS FROM SOVIET UNION AND OTHER COUNTRIES EXPECTED TO HELP KEEP THE SYSTEM GOING.

4. EVEN THOUGH CURRENT SITUATION VERY TIGHT, GENERAL MOOD OF OFFICIALS SEEMS TO BE OVERLY OPTIMISTIC DUE TO ANTICIPATED GOOD KHARIF CROP. ALL STATES SUFFERED IN VARIOUS DEGREES FROM POWER AND FERTILIZER SHORTAGES WHICH COULD HAVE EFFECT ON NEXT SPRING'S RABI CROP.
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Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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